

Status of Depleted Dolphin Stocks in the Eastern Tropical Pacific Ocean (ETP)

- There are three dolphins stocks in the ETP that are considered “depleted” under the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA).
- The MMPA required NOAA Fisheries to conduct abundance surveys of the three depleted dolphin stocks in the ETP for 1998, 1999, and 2000.
- These surveys are complete, and the most recent abundance estimates for three depleted dolphin stocks are as follows: 641,153 for northeastern offshore spotted, 448,608 for eastern spinner dolphins, and 143,725 for coastal spotted dolphins.
- Also as a part of the required research program, NOAA Fisheries made quantitative estimates of the current depletion levels of the three depleted dolphin stocks.
- Pursuant to the MMPA, a marine mammal stock is depleted when it falls below its optimum sustainable population range, the lower bound of which is 60% of carrying capacity.
- To determine depletion levels, NOAA Fisheries evaluated current population abundance relative to the population size that can be sustained by the ecosystem in the absence of human-induced mortality (i.e., prior to the purse seine fishery).
- These quantitative assessments could not be conducted for one of the depleted stocks, the coastal spotted dolphin, which lacks the necessary historical information required in these analyses.
- The northeastern offshore spotted dolphin and eastern spinner dolphin stocks are still depleted (20% and 35% of pre-fishery abundance, respectively).